

34th CST conducts multi-state, multi-day exercise

Soldiers and Airmen assigned to the Virginia National Guard’s Fort Pickett-based 34th Civil Support Team took part in a joint training exercise Aug. 19-24, 2018, near Edgewood, Maryland. CSTs from Delaware, Maryland, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. also took part in the multi-day exercise designed to enhance their response capabilities by simulating 24-hour operations where teams conducted mission handovers from one team to the next as well as operating in limited visibility conditions.

“This multi-CST exercise allowed the teams to focus on exercising operations with joint teams, exercise handover procedures and focus on communication interoperability,” said Maj. Thomas Mecadon, deputy commander of the 34th CST. “The teams responded with no notice to the call outs and with no prior training together, and Virginia and Delaware were able to integrate and conduct operations without sacrificing speed, time, or accuracy of sampling.”

Mission handover was exercised and required refinement by teams throughout the exercise as the mission shifted locations, Mecadon said.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/08/24/11927/>



A member of the 34th Civil Support Team survey team takes readings in a suspected hazardous materials lab a joint training exercise Aug. 21, 2018, near Edgewood, Maryland.

Virginia National Guard News Headlines

Virginia Army National Guard welcomes 14 new lieutenants

The Virginia Army National Guard welcomed 14 new lieutenants to its ranks with the commissioning of Officer Candidate School Class 60 and 61B Aug. 25, 2018, at Fort Pickett, Virginia.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/08/28/11907/>

Fowler receives Leadership in Contracting Award

Becky Fowler, a contract specialist in the Virginia National Guard United States Property and Fiscal Office, received the Leadership in Contracting award from the Office of the Director of Acquisitions and Head of Contracting for the National Guard Bureau July 12, 2018, at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/08/22/11924/>

Commonwealth ChalleNGe graduates 91 from Class 49

The Virginia Commonwealth ChalleNGe Youth Academy graduated 91 cadets from Class 49 during a ceremony Aug. 25, 2018, at Ocean Lakes High School in Virginia Beach.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/09/04/11934/>

Ceremony welcomes new 192nd Medical Group Detachment 1 commander

A new commander assumed command of the 192nd Medical Group, Detachment 1, during an assumption of command ceremony August 5, 2018, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/08/24/11921/>

Did You Know?

Fitness App Safe User Guide

Location-based fitness apps have made the news lately for endangering operational security and personal privacy. One app, Polar, shared information on 6,460 users from 69 countries and 208 sensitive locations like FBI offices, nuclear power plans and missile defense locations.

Read tips to protect yourself at <https://go.usa.gov/xUE7q>.

Air Assault, Pathfinder Schools held at Fort Pickett

It was “Zero Day” of Air Assault School, Aug. 7, 2018, and for most of the 270 Soldiers gathered at Fort Pickett, their reason for being there was simple: They wanted to prove something.

“I’m here to prove myself and to show them that a nerd can do it,” said Spc. Frederick Roddy, a cyber operations specialist assigned to the Fairfax-based 144th Cyber Warfare Company, 124th Cyber Protection Battalion, 91st Cyber Brigade.

The U.S. Army’s Air Assault School is a 10-day course divided into three phases: the combat assault phase, the sling load phase and the rappel phase. It is both physically and mentally demanding and the first challenge, making it through “Zero Day,” is often the hardest.

For the Soldiers gathered in the early morning hours at Fort Pickett, it started with a timed two-mile run. Soldiers had to complete the run in 18 minutes or less, then start the obstacle course. First, they had to climb a rope then they just kept going, down the cargo net, over a 40-foot tower, through the dirt, over a bunch of logs and the incline wall, over and through the weaver, across the rope and onto a log and, finally, to the high step-over. They did this quickly, to precise standards enforced by the cadre of the Fort Benning-based Army National Guard Warrior Training Center in the sticky heat that is August in Virginia.

After that, Soldiers washed the dirt and mud from their faces, cleaned up their uniforms and met back up in the classroom for lessons on aircraft safety and orientation, combat assault operations and the principles of aero-medical evacuation.

For Spc. Katie Umberger, a medic assigned to Charlie Company, 429th Brigade Support Battalion, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Air Assault School was an opportunity to face her fears.

“I’m afraid of heights,” Umberger said. “I’m terrified of heights, so I wanted to see if I could somehow get over that. I came to a one day prep class and didn’t even get close to the top of Jacob’s Ladder.”

Three weeks later, Umberger was one of just a few female Soldiers to make it through “Zero Day,” which included finally conquering Jacob’s Ladder.

A few days later, during the rappel phase of the course, Umberger was nervous. At the top of Fort Pickett’s newly-built rappel tower, she locked eyes with the Air Assault sergeant who calmly talked her through her first rappel. She took a few deep breaths at the top to calm her nerves before putting her faith in the ropes and heading down to the ground.

“I wanted to see if I could do it physically and mentally,” she said, and she did. She was one of the 199 Soldiers who earned their Air Assault Badge on Aug. 17, 2018.

While the Air Assault students were busy conquering their fears, 52 Soldiers were across the street at the 183rd Regiment, Regional Training Institute starting the U.S. Army’s Pathfinder School.

“This is not for the weak of heart,” said Staff Sgt. Danny Dornbusch, a Kentucky National Guardsman serving as a supply sergeant with 20th Special Forces Group. “You have to stay



More than 250 Soldiers hoping to earn an Air Assault Badge run, climb, crawl and maneuver through Fort Pickett’s Air Assault Obstacle Course Aug. 7, 2018, as part of “Zero Day,” the first challenge in the U.S. Army’s Air Assault School.

focused and give 100 percent, or you’re going to fail.”

Pathfinder School trains Soldiers on how to navigate cross country on foot, establish and operate day and night helicopter landing zones, establish and operate day and night parachute drop zones, conduct slingload and rappelling operations, and provide air traffic control and navigational assistance to both rotary and fixed wing aircraft.

While 52 Soldiers started Pathfinder School, only 29 completed the course requirements and earned their Pathfinder Badge.

Both courses were taught by cadre from the Fort Benning-based Warrior Training Center.

Read more: <http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/09/05/11938/>

MORE ON THE WEB

Airman’s design selected for 192nd FW commander’s coin

<http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/08/30/11917/>

Soldiers have until Sept. 30 to update their SGLI online

<http://vanguard.dodlive.mil/2018/08/30/11909/>

Photos: Rappel master hopefuls evaluated on command and control

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/albums/72157700352243744>

Photos: CERFP search and extraction team learns rope skills

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/vanguardpao/albums/72157694685481520>



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